



Spiritual Practices and Academic Performance of University Students in Samar Island

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between the level of spiritual practices and the academic performance of university students in state universities across Samar Island. It also aimed to propose a values development instructional package for university students. Using proportionate random sampling, the study involved 346 Education students from state universities on the island. The research assessed the students' level of spiritual practices and its correlation with their academic performance. The findings revealed that the overall average level of spiritual practices among students in the four state universities was 2.238, interpreted as "often practiced." In terms of academic performance, the general weighted average (GWA) of students was 1.92, equivalent to "very good." Statistical analysis showed a moderate positive relationship between the level of spiritual practices and academic performance. The computed correlation coefficient (r -value) was 0.290, indicating a linear association between the two variables. Moreover, the p -value of 0.043 was below the 0.05 level of significance, confirming that the relationship was statistically significant. These results underscore the importance of fostering spiritual growth among university students. The study recommends that administrators empower campus ministries to enhance spiritual activities within the universities, thereby fostering an environment supportive of students' spiritual development. Faculty and staff are encouraged to actively support these initiatives and engage in values formation programs for students.

Keywords

Spiritual practices, Academic performance, Values development instructional package

INTRODUCTION

Religion and education, two of humankind's most ancient endeavors, have long been closely intertwined. Historians and social scientists have explored this relationship and the ways in which the two may influence each other (Pew Research, 2016). For the past 20 years, many scholars have emphasized the importance of spirituality in education, asserting that it is a vital aspect that requires thorough research. Recent developments and life experiences with spiritual therapies have begun to highlight the significance of spirituality in human well-being and development (Astin & Astin, 2004; Oloyede & Ofole, 2016; Kitjaroonchai & Hungyo, 2019).

Several global studies have acknowledged and recognized the need for spirituality, particularly among higher education students, to improve academic performance and to better navigate life's challenges. Historically, higher education focused primarily on developing students' intellectual capacities, often neglecting their spiritual dimension. As some authors have affirmed, while higher education continues to place considerable emphasis on test scores, grades, credits, and degrees, it has increasingly overlooked students' "inner" development—values and beliefs, emotional maturity, moral development, spirituality, and self-understanding (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011, p. 2).

It is no surprise, then, that there has been a recent surge of interest in the areas of religion and spirituality on college campuses and within scholarly literature (Stafford, 2017). Researchers have found that students who regularly engage in religious practices tend to earn better grades, complete more homework, and experience fewer academic problems (Jeynes, 2003b; Logan, 2013).

Various institutions have begun to recognize the importance of religious practices in people's lives. Increasingly, reports of personal greed, corporate failures, and governmental misconduct reflect a broader moral and ethical decline. Higher education must instill spiritual and ethical values in students through its curriculum and pedagogy to help ensure a sustainable future (Priscilla, A.S., & Pushpalatha, M., 2022).

In Asia, particularly in Malaysia, a similar study emerged. The country places significant importance on religion and spiritual activities. For over two decades, the Malaysian Education System has integrated moral education (Balakrishnan, 2010) to ensure that students acquire not only academic knowledge but also positive values. This includes a strong focus on religious education, moral instruction, and spiritual activities that are designed to benefit students in the long term. Malaysia's recognition of the significance of religious and spiritual practices is reflected in its historical education system. The country has four distinct types of schools that have reinforced various racial, social, linguistic, and cultural groups: informal religious schools (madrasah), local Malay schools, Chinese vernacular schools, and Tamil vernacular schools. The Malay vernacular school system, which incorporated Islamic religious schools, was predominantly situated in rural areas where Malays resided (Balakrishnan, 2010).

In a recent study in the Philippines, Mendoza (2022) examined the impact of spirituality on students' academic performance. His findings revealed that 100% of respondents agreed that spirituality helps students focus on their studies. This supports Wood and Hilton's (2012) assertion that spirituality provides life purpose, thereby reassuring students of their academic goals. This suggests that spirituality contributes to students' focus and hope for achieving academic success. Mendoza (2022) also found that 96% of respondents believed in academic miracles and had experienced some themselves. While the concept of miracles may lie outside the scope of science, it holds significant relevance in this study. If mystical events related to spirituality help students excel academically, then spirituality is undeniably necessary in academia.

The conclusions drawn by various authors in the country may differ due to their distinct backgrounds and the unique situations they encounter. The experiences of university students in urban areas are vastly different from those of students in rural regions. Many college students commonly face challenges in their academic pursuits (Aspiras & Aspiras, 2014; Febrilia, Warokka, & Abdullah, 2011). Specifically, in the context of higher education institutions (HEIs) located in remote areas of the Philippines, it is not unusual to find college students who exhibit a lack of seriousness towards their studies, have poor class attendance, submit subpar assignments, refuse to engage in class activities, and achieve low exam scores, despite teachers believing that they are capable of performing better (Dagdag et al., 2019). In the country, some State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) are active in their Campus Ministry while others are not. The Campus Ministry in the SUCs in Samar Island though located in the rural areas is a very rich environment for developing and nurturing the spirituality of the students through religious and spiritual practices.

Essentially, Campus Ministry, in tandem with the Student Affairs Office, is the lifeblood of the university and the front line of student support and advocacy. State Universities, however, often neglect a very important aspect of many students' lives: religion, faith, spirituality, and the overall spiritual development of college students (Bowman & Small, 2010). In fact, according to Fukufuka (2007), many studies suggested that in the academic performance of the students, spirituality has a positive effect on it.

Based on the premises above, the researcher aimed to enhance the programs of the Campus Ministry in the SUCs of Samar Island in particular ESSU Campuses so as to offer religious and spiritual activities for all students. This study contemplated to provide the formulation of values development instructional package that develop students holistically.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to assess the spiritual practices and its relation to the academic performance of University Students. Specifically, this research attempted to answer the following questions;

1. What is the level of spiritual practices of the students in the State Universities?
2. What is the academic performance of the students in the State Universities?
3. Is there a significant relationship of the spiritual practices to the academic performance of university students?
4. Based on the findings, what values development instructional package formulation may be proposed?

Hypothesis of the Study

There is no significant relationship between spiritual practices and the academic performance of the students in the State Universities.

Review of Related Literature

Hall (2024) suggests that research on spirituality among college students indicates that they engage in a variety of spiritual practices, with prayer and communal activities being the most common. Incorporating spiritual practices into the classroom and academic life has supported students in balancing their personal and academic responsibilities, thereby enhancing their performance. Additionally, spirituality has played a distinctive role in helping students, particularly those from minority groups, develop their identities. These practices have enabled them to connect with their communities and find meaning and purpose in their lives.

Spiritual Practices

According to St. James Roman Catholic Church (2020), spiritual practices are activities that calm the mind and foster a deeper connection with the spirit within, enhancing our awareness and connection to the Divine. These practices nourish the gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as peace, joy, gentleness, kindness, and endurance, which can then be reflected in our

lives. Spiritual practices may also include activities like walking in nature, observing a sunrise or sunset, practicing Christian Yoga, or simply recognizing the presence of God in the people, places, and events of everyday life.

Effects of Religious Practices

According to Marripedia (2022), religious practices have five primary effects on individuals. The ***first effect is educational achievement***. Research by Regnerus and Elder (2003) reveals a positive correlation between religious attendance and higher grades. A study by Glanville et al. (2008) found that students who attended religious activities weekly or more frequently had a GPA 14.4 percent higher than those who never attended. Additionally, students who regularly attended religious services scored 2.32 points higher in math and reading tests compared to their less religiously-involved peers (Regnerus, 2000). Furthermore, over 75 percent of students who became more religious during college achieved above-average grades (Zern, 1989), and religiously involved students tend to work harder than their non-religious counterparts (Muller & Ellison, 2001).

The second effect of religious practices is educational attainment. While some believe that higher education leads to lower religious involvement, the Pew Research Center (2017) shows that college-educated Christians in the United States are often as observant as, or more so than, their less-educated peers. Regular religious practice is also linked to higher educational aspirations (Regnerus, 2001). Students who attended church weekly during their youth tend to have more years of schooling by their early thirties compared to their peers who did not attend church (Loury, 2004). Religious involvement has been found to positively influence school attendance, work activity, and time allocation among inner-city youths, reducing the likelihood of deviant behavior (Freeman, 1985). Frequent religious attendance is correlated with lower dropout rates and greater attachment to school (Regnerus, 2000), and it significantly reduces the likelihood of students skipping school (Sloane & Potvin, 1986).

The third effect is religious families. Religious involvement enhances a family's human capital in various ways. For instance, religiously engaged parents are more likely to plan for the future and structure their children's activities in ways that increase the likelihood of academic success (Muller & Ellison, 2001). Religious practice also fosters family cohesion, which in turn promotes academic competence and internal locus of control in youth (Brody et al., 1992). Parents who are intergenerationally altruistic often attend religious activities to ensure their children receive the necessary social capital to succeed in education and income (Fan, 2008).

The fourth effect concerns religious communities and peers. Attendance at religious schools has been shown to improve educational performance and attainment. Catholic schools, in particular, are known for fostering academic achievement among their pupils (Sanders, 1995). Parochial and private schools are often described as creating a supportive "social neighborhood" that reduces risks and promotes academic success (Furstenberg Jr. et al., 1999). Research has also shown that Roman Catholic students in Catholic-controlled schools are more likely to plan for college compared to those in public schools, even if they are the majority in the latter (Rhodes & Nam, 1970). Religious schooling, particularly with significant classroom instruction in religion, also positively influences adolescents' religiosity, especially in high school (Spilka, 1985). Low-income students in schools that emphasize academics and religion tend to be more committed to their faith and community than their peers in schools without such emphases (Benson et al., 1989). It is no surprise, then, that a 2015 Rasmussen Report found that 61 percent of parents with school-aged children believe there should be more religion in public schools (Rasmussen Report, 2015).

Positive peer relationships, such as good friendships, peer networks, and youth associations, can play a significant role in helping adolescents lead more engaged lives while discouraging risky behaviors, which may, in turn, enhance educational outcomes. Although the topic of peer relationships has received attention over the past 50 years, much of the research has focused primarily on dysfunctional behaviors and behavioral interventions. The social science understanding of the dynamics and operations of positive friendships remains limited (Dishion, 2000). Despite this limited body of research, some studies suggest that networks of religious peers can provide positive benefits. For instance, one study found that a student's values, along with those of their peers, could positively influence out-of-school behaviors (Hanson & Ginsburg, 1988, as cited in Marripedia, 2022). Another study indicated that peers' values partially mediate the positive impact of religious involvement on teens' educational expectations (Muller & Ellison, 2001). Elder and Conger further demonstrated that religious values shape youths' perceptions of their friends and influence their future marriage plans based on their religious beliefs (Elder & Conger, 2000). Additionally, research has shown that youth participation in religious activities fosters friendships that support and encourage academic achievement and engagement (Glanville et al., 2008, as cited in Marripedia, 2022).

Religious participation also promotes intergenerational closure, a concept referring to an adolescent's connection to both their parents and their parents' friends. This form of closure encourages role modeling and mentorship within the parent-child relationship as well as in interactions with other adults. Religion creates opportunities for children to engage positively with both their peers and superiors, which, in turn, fosters improved academic performance (Glanville et al., 2008).

Furthermore, religious practices influence students' work ethic. The beneficial effects of religious participation on education are conveyed through various channels, including the family of origin, peers, the church community, and the wider community. For at-risk youth, religious practice helps reduce socially deviant behaviors (Freeman, 1985, as cited in Marripedia, 2022). Regular attendance at religious services increases the internalization of traditional values and norms, strengthens a sense of internal locus of control and discipline, and raises adolescents' expectations for higher academic

achievement. In these ways, religious practice serves as a positive force that helps students stay on track in their academic pursuits (Marripedia, 2022).

These findings support various studies that highlight a positive correlation between religious practices, such as prayer, and academic performance. For instance, Horwitz (2021) found that adolescents with stronger religious commitments tend to earn better grades and complete more years of higher education. Additionally, spirituality has been shown to positively correlate with academic performance (Okunlola et al., 2021).

Other studies also confirm that religious activities, including prayer, contribute to academic success. Sullivan (2018) demonstrated that worship and learning have a reciprocal relationship. Widodo and Ardhyantama (2020) supported this by showing that prayer and learning offer effective, unique ways of solving problems and improving students' educational experiences. Abdullah (2020) found that students who engaged in weekly prayer activities displayed increased interest in learning and religious behavior. Lastly, Weikel (2019) concluded that spirituality, mediated by academic wellness, is a strong predictor of grade point average outcomes. These studies collectively underscore the positive impact of prayer and religious practices on students' academic success (as cited in Fabula, 2023).'

Academic Performance

Manish (2020) argued that academic achievement refers to the extent to which a student, teacher, or institution has reached their short- or long-term educational objectives. Milestones such as earning a secondary school diploma or a bachelor's degree are indicators of academic success. While academic achievement is traditionally measured through exams or ongoing assessments, there remains a lack of consensus on the most effective ways to evaluate it or which aspects are most critical—whether procedural knowledge, such as skills, or declarative knowledge, such as factual information. Moreover, research has yielded inconclusive findings regarding the individual factors that predict academic performance. Elements such as test anxiety, religiosity, environment, motivation, and emotions must be taken into account when developing models of academic success.

Husaini and Shukor (2023) explored the various factors that influence students' academic performance. They noted that there is a significant lack of research dedicated to identifying these factors. Most studies focus on predictive methods for assessing academic performance. Despite this, numerous factors impact students' academic outcomes, and the authors of this study identified several of these, with an emphasis on the most crucial ones. According to their findings, the key factors influencing academic performance include low entry grades, family support, accommodation, gender, previous assessment grades, students' internal assessment grades, GPA, and participation in e-learning activities.

In contrast, a study by Albarico et al. (2023) conducted at San Ildefonso National High School in San Ildefonso, Bulacan, identified several factors contributing to poor academic performance. These factors were categorized into personal conditions, study habits, home-related aspects, school-related aspects, and teacher-related factors.

It is evident that the factors affecting students' academic performance in state universities may vary significantly depending on individual life circumstances.

Relationship of Spiritual Practices and Academic Performance

Spirituality is closely linked to the sense of meaning and purpose in life, and to our sense of connectedness with others and the world around us. Students have reported that spirituality serves as a source of inspiration, driving them toward academic excellence. Many recognize that faith, religion, or belief in God plays a role in supporting their academic success. One way in which spirituality helps is by providing students with a clear sense of purpose in life, including their academic goals, which are seen as steps toward a better future (Wood & Hilton, 2012). Based on the principles of spirituality, it could be argued that spiritual practices serve as a guiding force for students, helping them achieve their academic objectives and set the foundation for a more promising future.

Several studies have explored the connection between spirituality, religious practices, and academic performance. Lehrer (2004) asserts that higher levels of religious observance and engagement lead to greater educational attainment. Religious involvement enhances an individual's social capital through family and peer networks, which in turn fosters academic success. In a study of U.S. teenagers, Chandra Muller and Christopher G. Ellison (2001) found a positive influence of religious participation on key academic outcomes, such as obtaining a high school diploma. Similarly, in her study of women raised in conservative Protestant households, Evelyn L. Lehrer found that those who attended religious services frequently during adolescence completed an additional year of schooling compared to their less observant peers.

The reinforcement of religious beliefs has been shown to improve students' academic achievement. Recent research suggests that students with higher levels of religiosity tend to have better academic scores, and as religious beliefs increase, so does academic performance (Sarchami et al., 2020). A study by K.L. Gunkel (2016) explored how religion motivates students to excel academically. Gunkel argues that religion provides students with a sense of purpose and meaning, boosting their self-esteem and, consequently, their academic performance. These findings are echoed by further studies in the field (Govil, 2023).

In a study by Miles et al. (2019), it was found that students who attend religious schools tend to outperform their peers in non-religious colleges. Ilana Horwitz, a professor at Tulane University, also supports these findings. In her article "What Do Students' Religious Views Have to Do with Academic Performance and Attending College?" (Horwitz, 2022), she discovered that students who are religiously active had a 0.5 higher GPA than their non-religious peers. In

another study, Horwitz (2022) cited research from the past 30 years showing a consistent positive relationship between religion and academic performance, affirming the longstanding connection between these two variables.

In the Philippines, a recent study by Lagura (2023) at Caraga State University found that while the relationship between spirituality and academic performance was not statistically significant, the results still indicated a positive correlation, rather than a negative one. This finding is consistent with the views of many scholars who have emphasized the positive connection between spirituality and academic success. For example, Flannery (2012) found a statistically significant positive relationship between spirituality and academic performance, while Wood & Hilton (2012) identified a similar relationship for African American male community college students. Jeynes (2020) found that prayer was associated with higher student outcomes, and that these effects were particularly pronounced in high-quality studies. Byfield (2008) also concluded that religion, particularly through church communities and faith in God, significantly contributed to the academic achievement of Black male students. Lee et al. (2007) discovered that religiosity in high school students was significantly linked to obtaining a bachelor's degree, and Pong (2017) found a positive correlation between spiritual health and academic performance (as cited in Napone, 2024).

Despite differences in findings, depending on the scope and methodology of each study, the overall body of research supports the notion that spirituality and religious practices have a positive impact on students' academic performance. This study seeks to integrate various theories of spirituality and explore how the spiritual practices of students influence their academic outcomes in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) on Samar Island. It aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how spiritual practices and shared spiritual identity affect students' overall development and educational achievements.

Theoretical Framework

A second widely accepted theory of faith and spiritual development was developed by Sharon Daloz Parks in two books: *The Critical Years: Young Adults and the Search for Meaning, Faith, and Commitment* (1986), and *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (2000) (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). Parks bases her theory on her firsthand experience working with students in higher education and religious settings throughout the course of her professional life (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). Much like James Fowler, Parks' theory is linked to Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg; however, she also utilized Carol Gilligan's theory, William Perry's theory, and Robert Kegan's theory to form a basis of her own theory.

Parks suggests that while Fowler's theory is important, and largely accurate, it is missing an essential time period of faith development: young adulthood (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). She stated that due to the fact that young adulthood is dominated by a quest to determine vocation, career path, and an overall sense of purpose and belonging, young adulthood is a pivotal time period for faith development. Due to this, Parks argued, Fowler's theory, while generally acceptable, is flawed (as cited in Evans et al., 2010).

Parks determined through her research that three forms of student development contribute to spiritual development. These three forms of development are as follows: cognition, dependent, and community (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). Cognition, dependent, and community then lead to four periods of faith development: adolescence or conventional, young adult, tested adult, and mature adult (as cited in Evans et al., 2010).

Parks' theory is very multi-faceted, and includes many working parts. However, one of the most compelling components of Parks' theory is that of the role that community plays in the spiritual growth and development of college and university students. She identifies five areas of community that are deemed essential components of development: conventional, diffuse, mentoring, self-selected, and open to the other. Each of these components is important, but Parks strongly stressed that the need for a mentoring community with young adults was very much a necessity in terms of overall spiritual development (as cited in Evans et al., 2010).

Parks (2005) argues that higher education institutions are uniquely qualified to be places of spiritual growth. Faculty and staff, in tandem with campus ministry organizations, have the ability to really assist students with their spiritual development (Parks, 2005). Mentoring communities and relationships, such as those that exist in higher education institutions, can be on the front lines of the spiritual development of college students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized quantitative research design. Specifically, it employed a descriptive and correlational research design to evaluate the religious practices, and the academic performance of the students. It concentrated primarily on how the spiritual practices affect the academic performance of the students. A survey questionnaire was explicitly distributed and answered by the students who were randomly selected. The study included the main campuses of SUCs in Samar Island in particular ESSU, SSU, NWSSU, UEP.

Descriptive as a research design was deemed suitable as the study describes spiritual practices and its relation to the academic performance of the students. Further, it also used a quantitative design. This research design was deemed suitable as the study tallied, collected, and interpreted the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Another research design that was used was correlational design. A correlational research design investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them. A correlation reflects the strength

and/or direction of the relationship between two (or more) variables. The direction of a correlation can be either positive or negative (Bhandari, 2023).

This research design was used to correlate the relationship between spiritual practices and academic performance of the students.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were the 2nd year to 4th Year students of the College of Education main campuses of SUCs in Samar Island. Below is the distribution of the number of students from the different state universities in Samar Island. Below is the distribution of respondents per school.

State Universities and Colleges (SUCs)	No. of Students	Sample Size	Percentage
ESSU	311	34	9.8
SSU	769	84	24.3
NWSSU	945	103	29.7
UEP	1,150	125	36.2
Total	3, 175	346	100%

This table shows the number of students population based on the identified universities. A total of 3, 175 students across the universities of Samar Island was considered in the study, distributed as follows: 311 (9.8%) from ESSU, 769 (24.3%) from SSU, 945 (29.7%) from NWSSU, and 1, 150 (36.2%) from UEP.

Research Instrument

The instrument for measuring the spiritual practices was developed and validated by Prof. Dr. med. Arndt Büssing, of University Witten/Herdecke, Germany through his research paper entitled “Spiritual Practices (SpREUK-P) data sheet”, dated June 2015. This instrument was used with an explicit permission from Prof. Dr. med. Arndt Büssing via email.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher asked for the approval of the Presidents of SUCs to administer a survey questionnaire regarding the spiritual practices of the respondents. For the academic performance (GWA) of the students, the approval of the registrar was sought. In addition, the averages of the first quarter for the A.Y. 2023-2024 was recorded.

The researcher distributed the survey questionnaires with the help of the faculty and staff of SUCs in the different settings. Retrieval was done right after the questionnaires were completed.

For the selection of the respondents, proportionate random sampling was utilized. The instrument that was used was a survey checklist questionnaire. The results were gathered, tallied, and tabulated according to the items checked by the respondents. Data were subjected to statistical methods to achieve the desired objectives of this research.

Measurement of Variables

To facilitate the analysis and to provide structure to the data so they can be measured in a systematic manner, the following codes and scales were used. For the spiritual practices related to the academic performance of the university students, the following codes were used for each of their respective categories.

<i>Code</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
3	2.51 – 3.00	Regularly practiced
2	1.51 – 2.50	Often practiced
1	0.51 – 1.50	Seldom practiced
0	0.00 – 0.50	Never practiced

To determine the academic performance of the students, the following scale was used:

<i>GWA</i>	<i>Performance</i>
1.0	Outstanding
1.1 – 1.5	Excellent
1.6 – 2.0	Very Good
2.1 – 2.5	Good
2.6 – 3.0	Fair

Analysis of Data

The data that were gathered from this study were tabulated, computed and applied an appropriate statistical tool.

Descriptive statistics employed univariate analysis through computations of frequencies, means, standard deviation, and percentages for statement of problems numbers 1, and 2.

Spearman Rho was used to assess the relationship between the spiritual practices and the academic performance of the students to answer the statement of problem number 3. The level of significance is set at .05 level of significance for rejecting and accepting the null hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The level of spiritual practices of the students in the state Universities was determined through the instrument developed and validated by Prof. Dr. med. Arndt Büssing, of University Witten/Herdecke, Germany in his research paper entitled “Spiritual Practices (SpREUK-P) data sheet”, dated June 2015.

SpREUK-P offers a quantifiable measurement of the level of an individual’s spiritual practices. There are 27 items in the questionnaire. Each item is scored on a 4-point scale (0 - never; 1 - seldom; 2 - often; 3 - regularly). The scores can be referred to a 100% level (transformed scale score), which reflect the degree of an engagement in the distinct forms of a spiritual/religious practice (“engagement scores”). Scores > 50% indicate higher engagement, while scores < 50 indicate rare engagement.

Due to the dearth of resources, 10-20 years’ studies were used as reference in justifying the data presented. The resources may seem to be outdated but the findings are still valid and significant in today’s generation. Many of the references were from other countries. In the country, there were limited resources found because of the relatively new nature of the case under investigation.

The level of spiritual practices of the students in the State universities

Data mining from the State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in Samar Island particularly the four (4) main campuses to determine the level of spiritual practices of the randomly selected college of education students during the 1st semester of the Academic Year, 2023-2024.

Table 1 illustrates the spiritual practices related to the academic performance of the students of the college of education of SUCs in Samar Island, its mean, standard deviation, and interpretation.

Table 1 Spiritual practices related to the academic performance of the students of the college of education of SUCs in Samar Island

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I privately pray (for myself, for others).	2.74	.536	Regularly practiced
I go to church /mosque / synagogue etc. (indicate what is appropriate).	1.98	.710	Often practiced
I make an effort for other people.	2.40	.602	Often practiced
I meditate (either Eastern or Western styles).	1.63	.852	Often practiced
I recite distinct (holy) texts.	1.64	.813	Often practiced
I read religious/spiritual books.	1.72	.786	Often practiced
I work on a mind-body discipline (i.e., yoga, qigong, mindfulness etc.).	1.46	.938	Seldom practiced
I perform distinct rituals (originated in other religious / spiritual traditions than mine).	0.93	.903	Seldom practiced
I turn to nature.	2.21	.796	Often practiced
I reflect upon the meaning of life.	2.61	.580	Regularly practiced
I try to get insight (also into myself).	2.58	.570	Regularly practiced
I work on my self-realization.	2.62	.578	Regularly practiced
I work on my spiritual development.	2.35	.639	Often practiced
I try to achieve a higher level of consciousness.	2.38	.653	Often practiced
I am aware in the way I treat the world around me.	2.57	.562	Regularly practiced
In my private area, religious symbols are important to me.	2.41	.812	Often practiced
I participate in religious events (i.e., religious congregations etc.)	1.99	.889	Often practiced
I belief in a (my) Guardian Angel.	2.55	.775	Regularly practiced
I help others.	2.60	.535	Regularly practiced
I consider the needs of others.	2.48	.581	Often practiced
My thoughts are with those in need.	2.34	.664	Often practiced
I do good.	2.41	.579	Often practiced
I feel connected with others.	2.25	.685	Often practiced
I work voluntary for others.	2.14	.707	Often practiced
I have a feeling of great gratitude.	2.50	.601	Often practiced
I have a feeling of wondering awe.	2.27	.644	Often practiced
I still have learned to experience and value beauty	2.65	.534	Regularly practiced
Grand Mean	2.238	.342	Often practiced

The grand mean was 2.238, which was interpreted as "Often practiced." This implied that the students of the College of Education in SUCs (State Universities and Colleges) on Samar Island often performed their spiritual practices through various actions that constituted their belief in God. The standard deviation was 0.342, indicating a higher level of consensus among the respondents. This suggested strong agreement from the respondents that spiritual practices were often practiced by university students in the SUCs of Samar Island.

The top three spiritual practices of the students were as follows: The first was "I privately pray," which had a mean of 2.74 and was interpreted as "Regularly practiced." Students in the College of Education in the state universities reportedly took time to pray privately during their spare time. It was important to note that private prayer was likely a daily routine for the students. This aligned with the Pew Research Center's U.S. survey (2016), which found that individuals who prayed daily and regularly attended religious services tended to be happier with their lives.

Private prayer was more convenient for students as a means of exercising their faith in God or a Supreme Being. Prayer acknowledged God's presence, and Catholic students understood it as a way of recognizing God's response (Cornelio, 2017). This finding implied that private prayer was an expression of the students' willingness to be in communion with God. Furthermore, private prayer was still practiced by students in the state universities, contrary to Fabula's (2023) study, which indicated a decline in prayer practices among millennials and a rise in individuals with no religious affiliation.

University students found it easy to express their faith in God through private prayer. This suggested that private conversations with God were the most convenient means for students to express their faith. Additionally, private prayer helped students overcome personal battles and challenges as they explored their ontological realities. Barbara (2021) affirmed that students continued to have inner experiences and concerns related to spiritual or ultimate matters. While many students had strong understandings of their realities supported by beliefs and practices, others struggled with unexpected changes in their ontological understandings. Despite these challenges, students' spiritual experiences evolved alongside their worldviews.

The second top spiritual practice was "I have learned to experience and value beauty," with a mean of 2.65, interpreted as "Regularly practiced." Students reportedly expressed and valued beauty, which revealed the wisdom of God, as noted by St. Augustine. This implied that the beauty of nature helped students express their faith and facilitated prayer.

The third top spiritual practice was "I work on self-realization," which had a mean of 2.62 and was also interpreted as "Regularly practiced." Students reportedly manifested their spirituality through self-realization, suggesting that knowing oneself helped them express their faith in God.

Conversely, the spiritual practices with the lowest ratings were as follows: The first was "I perform distinct rituals," which had a mean of 0.93 and was interpreted as "Seldom practiced." This indicated that performing distinct rituals was not popular among the students. The second was "I work on a mind-body connection," with a mean of 1.46, also interpreted as "Seldom practiced." Practices such as yoga and qigong were not widely observed among students. Although yoga and mindfulness interventions were becoming popular for improving psychological and physical well-being, yoga as an expression of prayer was not practiced by university students. Simbulan (2017) emphasized the positive impact of yoga-based interventions on reducing stress and preventing burnout among medical students, but this was not reflected in the current findings. Despite the evidence of yoga's positive effects on academic performance, as suggested by Tripathi et al. (2018), it remained an underrated practice among university students.

Lastly, "I meditate" had a mean of 1.63 and was interpreted as "Often practiced." Meditation, which involved silence, was reportedly challenging for students. They found it difficult to remain quiet and focus on prayer, potentially underestimating the value of meditation. Sarza et al. (2020) noted that mindfulness meditation increased productivity and reduced stress levels when consistently practiced, with improvements observed in measures such as the General Self-Efficacy Scale. Despite these benefits, students appeared to struggle with fully incorporating meditation into their spiritual practices.

In addition, it was implied that university students perhaps did not recognize the benefits of meditation in their academic performance. According to Vikas (2024), by developing a mindful approach to challenges, students could navigate stress and adversity with greater ease and optimism. This resilience not only enhanced their academic performance but also prepared them for future challenges beyond the school environment.

The university students from the College of Education found meditation difficult. This suggested that students were no longer comfortable with silence. Perhaps they were not fully aware of the importance of meditation in improving their academic performance. Studies showed that students who meditated regularly demonstrated better attention spans and were more capable of maintaining sustained focus during tasks. This improved concentration translated into better academic performance, as students were able to absorb and retain information more effectively (Vikas, 2024).

The study by Ali et al. (2019) revealed that the majority of teachers and students believed that religious practices and values had a positive impact on students' regularity and performance. Schools that incorporated religious education into their curriculum reported excellent results and a significant decrease in student dropout rates. Ali et al. (2019) also found that religious practices shaped habits such as regular school attendance and completing homework. This finding aligned with the study by Fagan (2010), which described habits like attending school regularly and dedicating more time to homework as correlating with improved academic performance. Fagan's study also emphasized that religious attendance strongly influenced academic success (as cited in Ali et al., 2019).

Similarly, Walker and Dixon (2002) found a positive correlation between spiritual beliefs, religious participation, and overall spirituality with students' grade point averages. Students with higher academic achievement consistently reported higher levels of spirituality. Phillips (2000) found similar results among African American college students, noting that higher levels of spirituality were associated with better adjustment to college life, which in turn correlated with higher academic success. Collectively, these studies indicated a strong relationship between spirituality and academic achievement.

In the Philippines, Filipino youth have remained deeply rooted in their Catholic traditions, often seeking a personal relationship with God. According to Cacho and del Castillo (2022), Filipino Christian youth believed that God's presence was evident through the care and kindness of family members and neighbors, with God serving as a source of hope.

It was, therefore, unsurprising that the four main campuses studied maintained their spiritual practices. The role of administrators proved crucial in shaping the spiritual compass of students. Hartley (2004) highlighted that institutional characteristic significantly influenced student development. Referring to Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), Hartley noted that declines in religious values and practices were less pronounced at Protestant and Catholic institutions. Conversely, selective colleges and universities often saw greater-than-expected decreases in religious affiliation and practices. These findings underscored that institutional characteristics played a role in shaping students' religious preferences, values, and behaviors during their college years (as cited in Hartley, 2004).

The academic performance of the students in the State Universities

The academic performance of the student participants in this study is measured in terms of their General Weighted Average (GWA) from the 1st semester of the academic year 2023-2024. This GWA represents the most recent academic performance for a semester that concluded in May of 2023. The 1st semester of the academic year 2023-2024, spans from August to December 2023.

The grading system employed by the State Universities in Samar Island uses number grades in increments of 1 ranging from 1.0 (highest) to 3.0 (lowest passing grade). Notably, the GWA range is downward in scope. The 1.0 average is considered Outstanding. The range from 1.1-1.5 is considered Excellent. The range from 1.6 to 2.0 is considered Very Good. The range from 2.1 to 2.5 is considered Good. The range from 2.6 to 3.0 is considered Fair.

To determine the academic performance of the university students, the General Weighted Average (GWA) of the 1st semester of the academic year, 2023-2024, of the of the students were taken from the four (4) school registrars with the permission from the respondents. Date privacy law was strictly observed.

Table 2 shows the academic performance of the students from the 4 State Universities.

Table 2 Academic performance of the university students in ESSU, NWSSU, SSU and UEP

Frequency (n=346)	Percentage	Grade	Performance
0	0	1.0	Outstanding
25	7.23	1.1 – 1.5	Excellent
224	64.74	1.6 – 2.0	Very Good
57	16.47	2.1 – 2.5	Good
40	11.56	2.6 – 3.0	Fair
Average	100%	1.92	(Very Good)

With an average rating of 1.92, equivalent to "Very Good," the findings confirmed that spiritual practices positively influenced students' academic performance. This result underscored the close connection between spiritual practices and academic success.

This outcome aligned with the study of Vaillant et al. (2008), which demonstrated that religious practice could provide significant mental health benefits for individuals lacking personal and social support resources. Similarly, Gorbaliipoor, Marandi, and Mazrui (2011) examined the relationship between religiosity and hardiness, finding a positive and significant correlation. Their study also highlighted that religiosity served as a strong predictor of hardiness.

Holland (2014) investigated the relationship between academic engagement, religiosity, and spirituality among African American urban youth. His findings suggested that religious and spiritual beliefs and practices offered essential support to their academic efforts. Additionally, research on African-American and European-American students further confirmed a correlation between spiritual beliefs, religious participation, and achievement motivation (Heydari et al., 2020).

Moreover, this study corroborated earlier findings about the impact of religious practices and values on students' regularity and homework habits, which related to Fagan's (2010) observations. Fagan described how habits such as consistent school attendance and dedicating more time to homework were strongly associated with good academic performance. Religious practices shaped these habits effectively. Schools that provided religious education were reported to yield excellent academic results and high grades. This finding was consistent with Fagan's assertion that religious attendance had a strong association with academic success. One study cited by Ali et al. (2019) revealed that students who participated in weekly religious activities achieved GPAs 14.4% higher than those who did not attend any religious activities. These findings collectively demonstrated the profound role of spiritual and religious practices in fostering academic resilience and success.

Relationship of the level of spiritual practices to the academic performance of university students

To evaluate the significance of the relationship between spiritual practices and academic performance, the Pearson Correlation test was employed. As Mukaka (2012) explained, correlation analysis determines both the strength and direction of the relationship between variables. The correlation coefficient (r) quantifies the strength and direction of this relationship on a scale ranging from -1.0 to +1.0. A negative value of r indicates an inverse relationship, where an

increase in one variable corresponds to a decrease in the other. Conversely, a positive r signifies a direct relationship, where both variables move in the same direction. The strength of the relationship is determined by the absolute value of r ; the closer the absolute value of r is to -1.0 or $+1.0$, the stronger the relationship. In contrast, values closer to 0 indicate a weaker relationship. The significance of the relationship is assessed by comparing the p -value to the predefined significance level (α). A p -value lower than α indicates a statistically significant relationship between the variables.

In this study, the Pearson Correlation test was applied to analyze the data, ensuring a rigorous assessment of the relationship between spiritual practices and academic performance. This method provided insights into both the strength and statistical significance of the observed correlation. Table 3 shows the Test on significant relationship of the spiritual practices to the academic performance of university students.

Table 3 Test on significant relationship of the spiritual practices to the academic performance of university students

Average spiritual practices	Average Academic performance	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Mean = 2.238	1.92 (Very Good)	.290	.043	Significant

This table presents the relationship between spiritual practices, as measured by SpREUK-P, and academic performance, measured by the General Weighted Average (GWA). The correlation coefficient (r) indicated the strength and direction of this relationship, while the p -value determined its statistical significance. When the p -value was less than 0.05 , the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a significant relationship.

The table highlighted the association between the average spiritual practices, which had a mean of 2.238 , and the average academic performance, reflected by a GWA of 1.92 , equivalent to "very good." The computed r -value of 0.290 indicated a moderate linear association between the two variables. The p -value of 0.043 was lower than the significance level of 0.05 , confirming the significance of the relationship. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that the spiritual practices of students in the four universities were significantly and positively correlated with their academic performance.

This study underscored the importance of adopting a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to education. Spiritual development played a critical role in shaping student outcomes. As Zhang and Wu (2016) noted, human beings were inherently spiritual, and faith should have been acknowledged as a vital component of education. Educators were instrumental in fostering students' integral development, serving as mentors who guided learners to embrace faith as part of their personal and academic growth. Van der Walt (2017) emphasized that educators needed to model a faith-based worldview, inspiring students to integrate such perspectives into their own lives.

Education should not have been limited to social, emotional, physical, or intellectual dimensions. To develop outstanding academic achievers, schools needed to nurture students' faith and spirituality. As Fabula (2024) asserted, cultivating a healthy spiritual life was essential for shaping intellectually capable and morally responsible citizens. This aligned with prior research, such as that of Sunia Fukofuka (2007), which demonstrated that students engaged in spiritual activities tended to perform better academically.

In light of these findings, state universities are encouraged to empower and activate campus ministries to strengthen students' spiritual practices. By doing so, institutions could have fostered an environment that supported both spiritual growth and academic excellence. Recognizing the positive impact of spirituality on student outcomes reinforced the idea that holistic education was key to nurturing well-rounded and successful individuals.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The students of the College of Education at the state universities in Samar Island often engage in spiritual practices that are related to their academic performance. Specifically, the practices of "privately praying," "experiencing and valuing beauty," and "working on self-realization" were commonly performed by the students.
2. The academic performance of the university students, with an average of 1.92 (equivalent to "very good"), indicates that the students of the College of Education believe that spiritual practices positively influence their academic performance at the university.
3. There is a significant relationship between spiritual practices and academic performance. The findings show that these two variables are positively correlated and statistically significant, suggesting that spiritual practices have a measurable impact on students' academic success.
4. To address the students' continuous improvement, a proposed values development instructional package should be implemented. This package should cover various aspects of students' lives, aiming to enhance their academic performance and contribute to the holistic formation of the students.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT

Author has declared no competing interest exist.

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